

copy To
Bishop Remington

OUR PARISH HISTORY

1859 - 1949

90th ANNIVERSARY

JUNE 26, 1949

THE CHURCH OF SAINT ALBAN

ROXBOROUGH'S "LITTLE CHURCH AROUND THE CORNER"

Rt. Rev. Oliver James Hart, D.D., Bishop of Pennsylvania

Rt. Rev. William Procter Remington, D.D., Bishop Suffragan

Rev. Robert Harold Stetler, B.S., Rector

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE CLERGY OF OUR PARISH

First Service - June 26, 1859, at 6785 Ridge Avenue
Parochial Mission of St. David's Church, Manayunk
Rev. J. W. Claxton, Rector

February 16, 1860 to January 1, 1861	Rev. R. H. Brown, Curate and Missioner
March 25, 1861 - three months	Rev. Charles R. Hale (Later, Bishop of Springfield, Illinois, 1892 to 1900)
July, 1861 to November, 1865	Rev. Marcus A. Tolman
January, 1866 to February 1868	Rev. Thomas W. Martin
One year Vacancy	
February, 1869 to December, 1870	Rev. J. H. MacElroy
June, 1871 to, 1872	Rev. Richardson Graham
1872 and 1873	Rev. A. A. Rickerts
1874 to August 18, 1875	Rev. John W. Windsor
One year Vacancy	
May 21, 1876 to August 6, 1882	Rev. E. Owen Simpson (Deceased as Rector)
September 11, 1882 to June 26, 1886	Rev. J. J. Joyce Moore
July, 1886 to 1888	Rev. J. Thompson Carpenter
September, 1888 to April 1, 1928	Rev. Charles Stratton Lyons (Later, Rector Emeritus)
April 2, 1928 to May 17, 1929	Rev. Edgar C. Campbell (Deceased as Rector)
One year Vacancy	
March 2, 1930 to January, 1944	Rev. N. Herbert Caley (Later Dean, Convocation of Germantown)
One year Vacancy	
March 15, 1945 - - - -	Rev. Robert H. Stetler, Present Rector

Total: 16 Rectors of the Parish

DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY
of the
CHURCH OF ST. ALBAN
1934

By JOSEPH E. J. McGEE

During the distressing years preceding the Civil War there were fourteen Protestant Episcopal Churches established in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. Among these were the Church of Saint Alban, now located at Ridge and Fairthorne Avenues, and St. Timothy's Church at Ridge and Jamestown Avenues, Roxborough.

Early in the year 1859, a number of communicants of St. David's P. E. Church, Manayunk, who resided in the vicinity of Ridge Avenue and Crease's Lane (now Livesey Lane) desired a church in Roxborough. As a result of several meetings, a congregation was formed and called tentatively, "St. Peter's Church".

When actual organization started these people took as a name, "The Church of St. Alban", in honor of the first British martyr, Alban.

The first service was held in a store at 6785 Ridge Avenue, which is now a private dwelling two doors north of the present church property. This service was held on June 26, 1859, eight days prior to the Fourth of July observance of the "Wissahickon Sunday School", which afterwards became St. Timothy's Church.

The initial service, in the store on Ridge Avenue, was conducted by Rev. J. W. Claxton, then Rector of St. David's Church, Manayunk.

There were fifty persons present, and on the following Sunday, July 3, 1859, a Sunday School was organized with forty-eight pupils in attendance. The Primary Department met in the home of Alfred Crease, at the northeast corner of Ridge and Fairthorne Avenues. The Primary teachers were Miss Louisa Crease, now Mrs. Louisa C. Harper, who is still living at 401 Green Lane; and a Miss Dannaker.

Giving the greatest impetus to this early movement was Frederick F. Fairthorne, who owned what is now a major part of the familiar Fairmount Farms. The present Fairthorne Avenue was the private road to his estate and was guarded by gates at the Ridge Avenue entrance.

The men who composed the first vestry, which drew the Church Charter, were: Frederick F. Fairthorne, D. Mason Godwin, Joshua Garsed, Joshua S. Garsed, C. C. Von Tagen, T. Cecil Andrews, Albert N. Rorer and Charles I. Crease.

Frederick F. Fairthorne donated the property on which the Church Parish House, the one-time horse sheds, and the drive are located. The corner lot was purchased in May of 1879, and a Rectory was built thereon and completed by the contractor, Benjamin T. Lentz, on November 8, 1879.

At a meeting of the vestry of St. David's Church, held on February 16, 1860, a letter was received from Mr. Fairthorne, offering to assume the payment of \$500 for the support of Rev. R. H. Brown, a deacon to serve as assistant to Rev. J. W. Claxton, and to have charge of the St. Alban's Mission for one year. The offer was accepted. On May 10, 1860, Mr. Fairthorne made another offer of \$500 towards a church building and stated there was \$2000 in view. St. David's accepted the offer and appointed Alfred I. Crease and Jacob Casselberry to view the proposed site and see to conveyance

of the property. On September 12, 1860, these two men reported that the lot had been deeded and the Chapel was in the course of construction, and three days afterward, on September 15, 1860, the cornerstone was formally laid.

Alfred I. Crease, who lived at Ridge Avenue and Crease's Lane, was chairman of the Building Committee. Alfred Byles was the architect; John Lehman the mason; and Turner & Brown were the carpenters. Incidentally, the same James Turner was the foreman carpenter when St. David's new church was erected in 1880.

Rev. Mr. Brown terminated his service on January 1, 1861 and at that time the organization of a parish was seriously discussed. As to the name of the mission, Mr. Fairthorne wrote to St. David's Accounting Warden, that the St. Alban's people had not yet applied for a charter, but that those who attended its services were in the habit of calling the church "St. Alban's" and that when application for the Charter was made, it would be under that name.

In a letter dated March 25, 1861, Mr. Fairthorne further stated that Rev. Chas. R. Hale, a deacon and later Bishop of the Diocese of Cairo, Illinois, had been secured to conduct the services in the unfinished church building. In the same year this clergyman was ordained a priest and became assistant rector of Christ Church, Germantown.

The first service in the finished church was held on October 13, 1861. In July of the same year, Rev. Marcus A. Tolman, previously assistant rector of St. David's Church, was chosen rector, and ordained a priest in November of 1865, he being the rector during the trying days of the War of Rebellion.

About one-half of the parish house had been completed at that time. It possessed a belfry carrying three small bells, one of which was tapped during Rev. Mr. Tolman's time by a rope leading to the vestry room, to inform the communicants that he was ready to begin the service. In the parish house, at the time of its completion, Howard McBride, of Pechin Street, started his Sunday School career, in the Primary Department.

Six days after Right Rev. William Bacon Stevens was consecrated Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania (on January 8, 1862) he dedicated the Church of Saint Alban building to the worship of God.

The clergy who participated in the dedication services were Rev. Dr. G. E. Hare, Rev. Dr. Benjamin Watson, Rev. George Leeds, Rev. Richardson Graham, Rev. E. W. Syle, Rev. E. L. Lycett, Rev. J. Leighton McKim, Rev. S. F. Hotchkin, Rev. Benjamin Wistar Morris, and Rev. Marcus A. Tolman, the Rector. Other clergy present included: John Woart of Norristown; Samuel Smith of Hulmeville; Chandler Hare; Charles R. Hale, and F. G. Clemson.

On June 30, 1862 after receiving formal notification of the Church's admission to the Diocesan Convention, the Secretary of St. David's vestry was instructed to return the deed to Mr. Fairthorne, he, with Charles I. Crease, being the respective wardens of the new parish.

In April of 1863 the founder, Mr. Fairthorne, met with financial difficulties and removed to Australia. He was living in Woodbury, N.J., in 1899, and probably dying there; was interred in St. Alban's churchyard in December of 1899. His wife

Emma Parker Rand, was buried in the same plot in 1906. A few years previous to his death, Mr. Fairthorne visited the Sunday School while it was in session. He showed a continued interest in the welfare of the parish and his removal brought trying days to the church.

In January, 1866, Rev. Thomas W. Martin became pastor and remained until February, 1868. A year of services by lay readers followed. In February, 1869, Rev. J. H. MacElroy became rector, remaining less than two years.

Rev. Richardson Graham was elected rector in June of 1871, and remained about one year. On September 19, 1871, a resolution was passed declaring the pews thenceforth to be free. This was sanctioned and approved by the Bishop of the Diocese. Rev. A. A. Rickerts was rector during 1872 and 1873. The next rector was Rev. John W. Windsor, who resigned on August 18, 1875, whereupon Bishop Stevens appointed a divinity student, John Cotton Brooks, as lay reader, who continued at this work until May 14, 1876, about which time he was ordered a deacon. On May 21, 1876 Rev. E. Owen Simpson became rector at St. Alban's. He entered vigorously into the work, but the purchase of the corner lot and the erection of the rectory (previously referred to) was apparently too much of a strain, and he expired on Sunday, August 6, 1882. The vestry recorded at that time, "He strove to do his Master's work, both temporal and spiritual, and these speak with their own tongues and will live."

On September 11, 1882, the Rev. J. J. Joyce Moore became the rector. In September 1885, the parish house was enlarged at a cost of \$900. Aaron Hofford was the contractor. Financial conditions were bad and it was necessary to place a mortgage of \$1500 on the rectory.

On June 26, 1886, Rev. Mr. Moore resigned. A month afterward he was succeeded by Rev. J. Thompson Carpenter, and in a year's time much of the indebtedness was paid off.

In September 1888, Rev. Mr. Carpenter was succeeded by a young deacon who was ordained priest the following year. Mr. Lyons proved to be capable as to finances as well as a constructive and spiritual builder. Stained glass and memorial windows were presented by the Sunday School and in memory of Lillie May Custer, John J. Joyce, Mary C. Hooman, Mary J. Duffield, Henry and Catherine Ashworth. The furnishings and interior of the church were changed and renovated, and the exterior of the building greatly improved. In 1890 the rectory indebtedness was paid off. In April of 1894 the Brotherhood of St. Andrew was organized. In 1897 a new Hook Hastings pipe organ was installed and first used by Miss Edith Moyer on Easter, 1897.

Under the direction of Mr. Lyons and the Warden, James L. Rahn, the church finances were commendably handled. On May 10, 1898, the rector, through direction of the vestry, informed the Bishop that the Church could relinquish aid from Diocesan funds, which was done. On June 17, 1898 the rector celebrated the 10th anniversary of his ordination, Bishop Whitaker and three members of Mr. Lyon's graduating class being present.

The vestry at this time consisted of James L. Rahn, Rector's Warden; Dr. Chas. Bland, Accounting Warden; E. Atlee Snyder; William R. Knipe; Elisha B. Knowles; Benjamin T. Lentz; Sheldon M. Custer; James R. Lord; Ralph R. Moyer; Joseph E. J. McGee; Edwin N. Hofford and Alfred Edmunds, Jr.

An endowment fund was started and amounted to \$307 at this time. On November 16, 1907 a gilded cross was donated by the American Bridge Company and erected on the peaked roof of the church vestibule. Two years later the parish house roof was replaced with slate, and all the buildings improved, most of the work being done by the Men's Guild of the church.

James L. Rahn, a vestryman for forty years, died on April 9, 1908, and a stained glass window was placed in the Vestry Room in his honor.

During Rev. Mr. Lyon's rectorship he was greatly inspired and aided in gathering an endowment fund of \$8500. To this was willed \$1000 by the late Miss Mary P. Hagner.

When replacing tin rain conductors on the church, by copper ones, in 1912, a piece of moulding, in one of the cornices was found with the following words written on it: "William T. Faust and Josiah Bickings, house carpenters, Curtin (Curtin) for Governor, 15,000 ahead". Building improvements kept on apace, the heating apparatus and chimneys being improved as time and funds permitted.

During the World War, St. Alban's Church, like others in the community were active in sustaining the morale of the soldiers, marines and sailors, who were engaged in the conflict. On St. Alban's Day, June 17, 1917, on a newly-erected flagstaff in the churchyard, an American Flag was raised in honor of two members who were seeing service in the Marine Corps; William F. Engle and J. Ernest McGee. Twenty-eight of the male members of the church eventually saw action in the various branches of the Nation's military service.

In 1922, during repairs to the Parish House roof, a board was found, bearing this legend: "Frank Mower, Jr. Saturday, November 14, 1885."

About 1926 the Sewing Guild paid for pointing the exterior of the church. The time-honored ivy and plaster were removed.

On April 1, 1928 Rev. Mr. Lyons conducted his final service here, after a rectorship of 39 and one-half years, becoming Rector Emeritus.

In 1924, a bequest became available to the Sunday School of \$1000 from the late Rev. Marcus A. Tolman, the interest of which was to be used to defray the cost of Christmas gifts to Sunday School members.

On April 2, 1928, Rev. Edgar C. Campbell began a 13-1/2 month rectorship, passing away on May 17, 1929. Rev. Mr. Campbell possessed rare gifts of oratory and was a preacher of remarkable ability. His widow still survives at the time of our 90th Anniversary.

A new Altar was installed and dedicated on February 9, 1929. The church worshipped with various clergymen and lay readers until the arrival of Rev. Neville Herbert Caley, on March 2, 1930. Activities once more took a new life and greater improvements to the church are continuing. A new lectern and pulpit, in memory of Rev. and Mrs. Lyons, replaced the former ones placed in service by Mr. Lyons in 1889. A new lighting system has been installed. Mr. Caley has proven to be a talented musician as well as a splendid preacher. The choir, under his direction, ranks second to none in the locality. The future of St. Alban's Church appears in a fine light under his leadership.

The vestry consisted of Ralph Moyer, Rector's Warden; Theodore Bechtel; Alfred R. Bechtel; William Holland; William A. Taylor; Howard S. Goodman; Owen B. J. Fullaway, and Alvion P. Mosier.

The marble tablets on the church walls are in memory of Alfred Crease, Joshua Garsed (slain at the Battle of Gettysburg) and Clifford Rahn (son of James L. Rahn). Miss Mary P. Hagner, a life-long member and supporter of the church, died on February 23, 1931. The present font in the church is a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. James Work.

Among the valued workers during the existence of St. Alban's Church have been Annie Kimble Snowden, Miss Lily Snyder, Mrs. Elizabeth Dearnley, Benjamin T. Lentz, and Mrs. George W. Moyer. The present Sewing Guild is composed of members of St. Alban's Church, as well as of other denominations, and contributes largely to the finances of the church. Mrs. Israel James is president. As one of the workers at St. Alban's School, the Men's Guild, and the Brotherhood a fine record was left by the late Dr. James M. McGee.

The Young Peoples' Fellowship and the Altar Guild of the Church are present-day active groups. The rare ability and devoted service of Miss Edith Moyer, as organist for 37 years, is something which members of St. Alban's Church are justly proud. Miss Moyer continued as a member of the choir until 1947. The late Mrs. Maud Rahn Bechtel preceded Miss Moyer as organist; Miss Moyer was succeeded by Mrs. Alfred R. Bechtel.

The writer is indebted for much of the foregoing information to the late Rev. Marcus Tolman, Rev. A. A. Rickerts, and the Rev. Mr. Lyons, Miss Mary Hagner, Rev. E. O. Simpson, Rev. R. J. Carpenter, Mrs. Louisa C. Harper, Howard T. McBride, Frederick F. Fairthorne and the Church Standard, of the St. Alban's Day, June 17, 1899. This brief history was first compiled as a preceding to the 75th anniversary of the church, which took place on June 26, 1934, and supplemented for our 90th anniversary (1949).

The Rev. N. Herbert Caley is the only surviving former rector of this parish. He is currently rector of St. James, Langhorne, Pa., and Dean of the Convocation of Germantown of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

(The facts are all those which came to the attention of the scribe. If anyone possesses additional information it will be sincerely appreciated, in order that the records may be made as complete as is possible.)

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In December 1934, The Pence Plan was instituted to defer expenses of public utilities. In 1947 the proceeds from the Pence Boxes henceforth were designated for the Building Fund.

In 1935, the parish, for economic reasons, requested and received assistance from the Diocesan Sustentation Fund. In October 1944, this aid was voluntarily terminated by action of the Vestry.

In March 1935, the Sewing Guild financed the building of our present kitchen facilities in the Parish House, which were dedicated February 9, 1936.

In 1935 the Endowment Fund amounted to \$4,871.50; today, this fund amounts to \$10,000.00, plus an additional \$1,000 for the benefit of the Church School. For future improvements, the Sewing Guild, which celebrated its fiftieth year of activity in 1948, also holds a \$1,000 bond.

The memorials of the church have numerously increased through the years, and in many ways we have occasion to remember the active service and abundant generosity of former members of the parish. As needs have arisen, parishioners, by gift or bequest, have most readily and kindly responded. The Book of Memorials contains the record of each acquisition, and is available at all times for all to read. The planned series of stained glass windows for the church, begun in 1942, was completed in 1948.

On February 15, 1939, the appointment of one to four men for the auxiliary vestry was authorized to augment the regularly elected vestrymen. Appointment to be made by the Rector and Wardens to serve for the calendar year. The first appointees were C. E. Rutherford, R. C. Flanders, Wm. Caley and Carl L. E. Schwartz.

In April of 1940, consideration began of widening Fairthorn Avenue, removing the fence and laying new pavement. The deed of dedication was made in June, 1940.

In February 1941, the Hearing Aid Installation was made in the church at four locations on the west side, as a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore A. Bechtel for the benefit of the hard of hearing.

April 16, 1941, Mr. Ralph R. Moyer resigned as vestryman and Senior Warden, and was subsequently designated as Rector's Warden Emeritus. He was succeeded by Mr. A. R. Bechtel. May, 1941, the Rector, Mr. Caley, was elected Dean of the Convocation of Germantown.

In January 1942, the Honor Roll for World War II Veterans was authorized by the Vestry, with an appropriate plaque to be obtained later. This plaque, with a matching plaque for the Veterans of World War I, was dedicated at an appropriate and impressive service on Sunday evening, April 20, 1947. During World War I, the parish house was equipped by the Red Cross for emergency use for 30 persons.

January 20, 1944, the Rev. Mr. Caley's resignation as Rector was received by the Vestry and accepted with regret, effective on February 15. After a 13 month vacancy, on March 15, 1945, our present Rector, the Rev. Robert H. Stetler, began his tenure as Rector. Under his active leadership and direction, the tempo of our parish life and our participation in community and diocesan affairs have considerably increased. The next decade presents a future of promise and encouragement for the Church of Saint Alban in Roxborough.

On July 4, 1945, after a long period of inactivity, our parish again resumed its representation in the Sunday School Parade, and we resumed again a picnic program at our own area in Wissahickon Park, at the junction of Livesey Lane and Henry Avenue.

In 1945, within one month, our parish suffered the serious loss of three prominent and active laymen: Mr. Theodore A. Bechtel, Accounting Warden; Mr. Charles E. Rutherford, Senior Warden, and Mr. Owen B. A. Fullaway, former Vestryman. Mr. Alfred R. Bechtel, succeeded as Accounting Warden, and Mr. Wm. P. Eccles as Senior Warden. In 1948, Mr. Flanders succeeded Mr. Eccles as our Senior or Rector's Warden.

Beginning in 1939 our Wattis Group, with consistent progress, has been extremely helpful in the financial structure of our parish. It is hoped that with normal parish growth, and with more generous and regular giving, the earnings of such organizations can be held in reserve for special and necessary projects which are extra-budgetary items.

Our Building Fund, for the enlarging and improving of our parish house facilities, was instituted on July 4, 1945. On Easter Monday, the Bond and Stamp Plan was authorized and has been successfully introduced. The Pence Boxes were not discontinued, but are an aid to collecting moneys for the eventual purchase of Stamps (10¢ each) or Bonds (\$10.00 each).

The Girls' Friendly Society Chapter was rechartered on September 23, 1947, and under Mrs. William McHale has become a vital part of our church's work among girls. Among boys, the training and regular serving of our altar boys has been continually observed as a great aid in the conduct of our services. The Young Peoples' Fellowship, reorganized with the help of Mr. and Mrs. I. Wesley Manley, Jr., is now under the sponsorship of Miss Martha Boyce and Stanley Slovitsky. As more of our young people reach high school age, this group is sought out for its program of service and sociability.

The annual reports, since 1945, are now published in printed form to give all parishioners full detail of parish activities during the preceding year. Much of recent interest and development is to be found in these reports, which deserve your careful and studied reading. Recent property improvements have included the installation of sewer pipes on Fairthorn Avenue (1947) and on Ridge Avenue (1949); connection of facilities in the rectory (1947) and the shingling of the Rectory (1945) with provision of new heating and cooking facilities in the Rectory (1948).

Mrs. A. R. Bechtel resigned as organist on July 1, 1947, and was succeeded by J. Stokes Leeds, and later by our present organist, Mr. H. Gordon Thomas.

Our Church School Organist is John Eccles; pianist for the Beginner's Department is Miss Catherine Meagher.

Our present Vestry includes:

Robert C. Flanders, Senior Warden
Alfred R. Bechtel, Accounting Warden
Alfred W. Mays, Chairman, Property Committee
William Renshaw, Chairman, Building Fund Committee
George Dunlap, Chairman, Music Committee
Irwin H. Engle, Chairman, Finance Committee
Edward D. Pryor
Albert E. Tuttle

Auxiliary Vestrymen include:

Reginald R. Hayes
John Howard, Jr.

Our present Parish Organizations include:

Woman's Auxiliary	First and Third Mondays
Sewing Guild	Tuesdays, October to May incl.
Altar Guild	Quarterly
Wattis Group	Thursdays, September 15 to April 15
Girls' Friendly Society	Tuesdays, October to June
Church School	Every Sunday, 9:30 a.m.
(Superintendent, Mr. Alfred W. Mays)	
Choir	Fridays, September 15 to June 30
Altar Boys	Sundays, 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.
Ushers	Sundays, 11 a.m.
Nursery Workers	Sundays, 11 a.m.
Young Peoples' Fellowship	Sundays, October to June
Vestry and Aux. Vestry	Monthly, September to June
Building Fund Committee	Subject to call of Chairman

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